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THE LARGE SOVIET MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

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The decision to publish the second edition of the Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Meditsinskaya Entsiklopediya (Large Soviet Medical Encyclopedia) is of great political, scientific, and practical significance. The first edition of the encyclopedia was completed in 1936. As the first national medical encyclopedia created by the efforts of Soviet scientists, this work has played a considerable role in the development of medical science.

However, the great achievements made in various fields of medicine and public health require the publication of a second edition, which is to be supplemented and revised. During the past 20 years, medicine has made great progress. The reader of the first edition of the Medical Encyclopedia would seek in vain such subdivisions as antibiotics, tracer atoms, the novocain block, complex [many-sided] methods of treatment, fluorography [fluororentgenography], etc. He would also not find information on such drugs as analgin, ascorbic acid, barbamyl, dibasol, dimesrol, campolon, penicillin, streptomycin, phenamine, phthivasid, ekmolin, etc., which have been widely introduced into practical medicine.

During the past 20 years, great changes have taken place in the organization of Soviet public health protection. During that period, the number of physicians increased from 80,000 to 300,000. The number of therapeutic-prophylactic institutions also increased and the type of medical service given to the workers has changed. Many changes have also taken place in medical education and the advanced training of physicians. A sixth year of instruction has been added at the institutes and new types of specialization and programs were created. All of this must be reflected in the new encyclopedia.

The discussions in the fields of biology and physiology, which have been conducted during recent years and which touched upon a number of borderline disciplines, make it possible to interpret many phenomena and processes in a more cogent manner, from the materialistic standpoint.

Sometimes, such serious problems as the inculcation into science and practical medicine of Pavlov's teaching, are being vulgarized in the USSR. The fight against this type of vulgarization and the exposure of pseudoscientific tendencies (as exemplified in Bosh'yan's theories, etc.) must find a place in the subject matter of the new encyclopedia.

Many social and hygienic concepts have changed radically since the publication of the first edition. The new articles on abortion, alcoholism, etc., will be entirely different.

The article entitled "Medicine" will be subjected to considerable revision. Some of the more complicated articles (i.e., those on disease, life, heredity, etc.) must be discussed at conferences, meetings of scientific groups, and societies before publication.

Various medical disciplines have expanded to such an extent that they may require treatment in independent editorial subdivisions. This applies to physiology, ophthalmology, urology, neuropathology, and a number of other disciplines.

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Soviet medical science correctly evaluated the significance of the history of medicine and a special division will be assigned to this discipline.

The terminology and all problems of military medicine were treated inadequately in the first edition, where only a few articles were devoted to problems of military medicine. In the second edition, military medicine will occupy a special subdivision in which the experience and achievements of Soviet medicine during World War II will be reflected. The new edition of the encyclopedia will contain 23 editorial subdivisions which will treat every discipline in detail. For instance, the subdivision on surgery will contain the following secondary subdivisions: general surgery, special surgery, cavity surgery, surgery of the limbs, neurosurgery, oncology, surgical diagnosis, plastic surgery, surgery of the glands of internal secretion, operational surgery, dermatology, orthopedics, therapeutic physical culture, etc.

The editorial subdivisions will be arranged alphabetically [according to the Russian alphabetic order] as follows: obstetrics and gynecology, anatomy, biology, internal diseases, military medicine, hygiene, dermatology and venereology, history of medicine, neurology, public health organization, otorhinolaryngology, ophthalmology, pediatrics, psychiatry, radiology and roentgenology, stomatology, urology, pharmacology, physiology, physical methods of therapy, chemistry, and epidemiology combined with microbiology.

A special subdivision on nomenclature and transcription will also be contained in the new edition. Problems of a uniform nomenclature and transcription are of great significance in the classification of scientific medical terms, new names of diseases, syndromes, symptoms, etc. A survey of various manuals, textbooks, and journals has shown that standardized nomenclature is often absent and that incorrect transcription of medical terms is used, resulting in a faulty understanding of the subject-matter. Furthermore, medical phraseology is replete, to a superfluous extent, with Latin and other foreign names applied to diseases, equipment, drugs, etc.

In the USSR, literature has acquired a status of general popular acceptance. Consequently, there is every possibility that the medical community will collaborate in the preparation of the important second edition of the medical encyclopedia.

The editorial board of the encyclopedia will discuss the preliminary list of words extensively with specialists and will strive to use all expedient proposals made in that connection.

In the first edition, the index of terminology was compiled for individual volumes while there was no general index covering all 35 volumes. This shortcoming will be corrected in the second edition. It is proposed to compile a separate volume of indexes, containing subdivisions on terminology, subject matter, bibliography, illustrations, and names of persons.

The second edition will comprise 35 volumes containing 50 printed sheets each. It will have a circulation of 75,000 copies. Preparation of matrixes will make it possible to increase circulation if necessary. The most prominent authors and editors will collaborate in compiling the encyclopedia, so that the high quality of the articles published is assured.

The Large Medical Encyclopedia should become the manual of every Soviet physician. It will serve to raise the qualifications of physicians and the medical and biological education of medical practitioners will be expanded. The encyclopedia must answer any question which may arise in any special branch of medicine, and will form an objective index of the Soviet medical achievements during the period of the building of Communism.

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